Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and forty-fourth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 23 February 2018, at 3.10 p.m.

President: Ms. Veronika Bard ..... (Sweden)

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The President: I call to order the 1444th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Excellencies, dear colleagues, allow me to address the list of requests from States not members of the Conference that wish to participate in our work during the 2018 session.

The requests received by the Conference secretariat up to yesterday, 22 February, at 3 p.m. are contained in document CD/WP.604/Add.4, which is available on your tables. Any requests from non-member States received subsequently will be presented for consideration and decision at the next plenary meeting. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite the State in question to participate in our work in accordance with the rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: I will now suspend the meeting for a brief moment in order to allow the representative of the non-member State that has just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take a seat in the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. Dear colleagues, last Tuesday I informed you of my intention to immediately begin consultations on the appointment of the coordinators of the subsidiary bodies or working groups. Between Tuesday and today, I have consulted widely on this matter; that is the reason why we cancelled yesterday's plenary meeting. At the same time, I felt that I should inform you of the progress made in the consultations before we enter the high-level segment of the Conference starting on Monday.

I have consulted with numerous delegations on the follow-up to the decision of 16 February. For reasons that you surely understand, I have not been able to consult with all delegations and therefore I wish to share with you the state of play of the consultations. The main thrust of the consultations refers to the list of coordinators for the subsidiary bodies. The issue of equitable regional distribution is at the centre of these consultations. It is my understanding that there is a strong wish that the respective subsidiary bodies should be coordinated by two coordinators from the Group of 21, two from the group of Western European and Other States and one from the group of Eastern European States. As a result of the consultations held so far, we have identified several candidates for the role of coordinators. We have, however, not reached the stage where all five coordinators have been identified and can be presented to the Conference for appointment. We are close, but not yet quite there. I will continue the consultations with a view to presenting the list to you by next Thursday, 1 March. Given the positive and constructive spirit that still prevails in the Conference, I am confident that this is doable. It is certainly my goal.

Another issue that follows from last Friday's decision is the question of an even allocation of time to the respective working groups. Let me assure you that all five working groups will be treated equally in this respect. The time allocated to the five groups will be the same. I will present you with the timetable for the subsidiary bodies once I have consulted on it with the five coordinators.

To sum up, the consultations are proceeding in a very positive and constructive spirit. We are aiming to conclude them next week, so that I can present for your consideration and subsequent approval the list of coordinators of the subsidiary bodies, together with a timetable for the work of the groups.

I will now proceed with the meeting, including any other issue you would like to address. I recognize the delegation of Pakistan.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): Madam President, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, let me begin by congratulating you on assuming this function and assuring you of the full support of my delegation.

We appreciate the extensive consultations undertaken by you. Given your commitment and diplomatic skills, coupled with the able support of your excellent team, we

are confident of achieving further progress towards the resumption of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament under your leadership.

We also deeply appreciate the work done by the outgoing President, Ambassador Aryasinha of Sri Lanka. He guided us towards a landmark decision that has allowed the Conference to resume substantive work. Given the lack of consensus on the commencement of negotiations on any issue in the Conference, this framework provides a next best alternative that is both practical and pragmatic. It will allow substantive consideration of all agenda items, without any preconditions, to develop a better understanding of the various perspectives in order to build convergences and narrow down the differences.

My delegation will participate actively in the discussions that will be held under the various subsidiary bodies. We hope that all of us will utilize this opportunity to its optimum potential. At this stage, in accordance with the adopted decision, we look forward to the appointment of the five coordinators on the basis of equitable geographic distribution and, as you have said, an agreed timetable of meetings allocating equal time to each of the five subsidiary bodies. These two aspects — the appointment of the five coordinators and the timetable of meetings — should be formally agreed by the Conference in order to have clarity and predictability for the whole year and to avoid any possible confusion at a later stage.

We commend all your efforts and consultations in this regard and I take note of your opening remarks. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and constructive engagement as we finalize these details to the satisfaction of all member States.

The President: I thank Ambassador Amil for his statement and for the kind words of support to the presidency, which encourage us to work even harder.

I now recognize the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Louafi (Algeria): Permit me, at the outset, Madam President, to offer our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to express our appreciation for your efforts and those of your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, which culminated in the adoption of the decision to establish five subsidiary bodies to discuss issues relating to agenda items. You can count on my delegation's full cooperation and support for your efforts to advance the work of the Conference.

My delegation also wishes to express its gratitude to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and his team for their valuable support for the work of the Conference.

Furthermore, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who displayed her commitment by attending the opening meeting of the Conference and sharing her views on disarmament. We also wish to welcome the new Ambassadors to Geneva from Austria, Egypt, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Peru and the Russian Federation.

Algeria attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament issues, in accordance with the mandate assigned to it by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament. It is, therefore, concerned about the deadlock stemming from its failure to adopt a programme of work for more than 20 years. We continue to believe that this deadlock is not due to the dysfunctional nature of the Conference, but rather to member States' lack of political will to shoulder their responsibilities vis-à-vis the issues on the agenda.

The problem currently faced by the Conference does not consist in the acceptance or rejection of negotiations on an agenda item, but rather in the establishment of priorities. Recognition of such priorities will contribute to the establishment of a sustainable programme of work.

Algeria regards nuclear disarmament as a core issue for the Conference. No one can deny that nuclear weapons pose a threat not only to international peace and security but also to the whole of humankind. The issue of nuclear disarmament must therefore be a top

priority for the Conference. I wish to recall, in this context, the position of my country, which advocates nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all international forums.

On 20 September 2017, Algeria signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on 7 July 2017, and recognized it as a necessary step towards the delegitimization of nuclear weapons and their total elimination. Algeria also signed the Additional Protocol to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on 16 February 2018. We take this opportunity to reiterate the firm position of Algeria that the NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to underscore the need to ensure that it is fully implemented and that its three pillars are respected in a balanced manner. We call on all States that are not parties to the NPT to accede to it promptly and unconditionally. We also urge the nuclear-weapon States, which bear prime responsibility for nuclear disarmament, to meet their obligations under the NPT, including regarding the practical steps agreed upon in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the 2010 action plan. We call on them to demonstrate the political will to enable the 2020 NPT Review Conference to adopt concrete recommendations concerning nuclear disarmament. My country also underscores its commitment to the implementation of the 2010 action plan concerning the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and expresses its deep disappointment at the postponement of the conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

My delegation reasserts its position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the sole effective safeguard against the use or threat of the use of such weapons. Pending the achievement of this goal, it is important for the Conference on Disarmament to meet the legitimate demand for the security and protection of non-nuclear-weapon States by making tangible progress towards negative security assurances. This requires the conclusion of a legally binding international instrument that provides effective safeguards for non-nuclear-weapon States under all circumstances against the use or threat of the use of nuclear weapons. It is also important to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to engage in negotiations on a legally binding instrument banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices as a step on the path towards disarmament.

The issue of stocks of such materials should also be adequately addressed. It should be stressed that action to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons should not undermine the sovereign right of States to acquire nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. With regard to outer space, which presents a specific challenge to international security, we wish to underscore the importance and validity of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. In our view, the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, which was proposed by the Russian Federation and China, as well as the draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, which was proposed by the European Union, can help us to achieve positive progress in this area.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for his comprehensive statement clarifying the position of his country.

Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case. This, then, concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Monday, 26 February 2018, at 10 a.m., with the beginning of the high-level segment.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.